

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00391 01 OF 02 290831Z
ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9152
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0391

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 4 DIMPTD
TAGS: PEPR EAID PDEV PBOR VM CH UR CB
SUBJECT: WESTERN AMBASSADOR FROM HANOI SEES INCREASING
VIETNAMESE-SOVIET LINKS

SUMMARY: A WEST EUROPEAN AMBASSADOR BASED IN HANOI
SAID THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE SOCIALIST
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY TIED TO
SOVIET POLICY. HE OFFERED FOUR REASONS FOR
THIS TREND: A) THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE KNOWN TO THE
VIETNAMESE THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE SRV'S FORGING OF
CLOSE TIES WITH WESTERN NATIONS; B) EARLIER WESTERN
INTEREST IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH VIET NAM LARGELY
HAS EVAPORATED; C) IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY INDIGENOUS
COMMUNIST MODEL, THE VIETNAMESE HAVE TURNED INCREAS-
INGLY TO THE SOVIETS FOR BASIC PLANNING ASSISTANCE; AND
D) THERE IS A BASIC CONGRUITY OF VIETNAMESE AND SOVIET
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 00391 01 OF 02 290831Z

INTEREST IN BLOCKING THE EXTENSION OF CHINESE INFLUENCE
IN THE REGION. END SUMMARY.

1. A WEST EUROPEAN AMBASSADOR ACCREDITED TO HANOI TOLD
US THAT IN HIS VIEW THE HANOI LEADERSHIP HAS DETERMINED
THAT AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TO MID-TERM, IT MUST MAINTAIN
CLOSE TIES TO THE SOVIET UNION.

2. HE SAID THAT DURING 1977 THE SOVIETS REACTED NEGATIVELY TO WHAT IT SAW AS EMERGING WESTERN COMPETITION TO SOVIET INFLUENCE IN HANOI AS REPRESENTED IN THE WOODCOCK MISSION VISIT TO HANOI AND PHAM VAN DONG'S VISIT TO WEST EUROPE. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS FORCED PHAM VAN DONG TO ABBREVIATE HIS WEST EUROPEAN VISIT AND TO SCHEDULE A PROLONGED VISIT TO MOSCOW. HE LIKENED THE SOVIET ACTION TO STALIN'S REFUSAL TO PERMIT CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MARSHALL PLAN.

3. MOREOVER, THE ABSENCE OF ANY MEANINGFUL FOLLOW UP TO THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION AND THE HOLLOWNESS OF THE FRENCH ASSISTANCE PROPOSAL (MUCH OF WHICH ALLEGEDLY CONSISTED OF RE-PLEDGES OF ASSISTANCE PROMISED EARLIER) CONVINCED THE HANOI LEADERSHIP THAT THE WEST WAS NOT RELIABLE. IN CONTRAST TO THIS THE SOVIETS TANGIBLY DEMONSTRATED THEIR RELIABILITY BY QUICKLY DIVERTING USSR BOUND SHIPMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN WHEAT TO THE SRV TO MEET CRITICAL VIETNAMESE FOOD NEEDS IN 1977 AND BY RUSHING PLAGUE VACCINE TO VIETNAM DURING THE LATE 1977 OUTBREAK OF THE DISEASE IN VIET NAM.

4. THE VIETNAMESE ALSO WERE DISILLUSIONED WITH WESTERN BUSINESS RESPONSES TO TRADE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SRV. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THIS

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 00391 01 OF 02 290831Z

DISILLUSIONMENT WAS MUTUAL, HOWEVER, AND AROSE AT LEAST IN PART FROM THE SRV'S PRACTICE OF TAKING THE MOST FAVORABLE TERMS OF A VARIETY OF FOREIGN BUSINESS VENTURE PROPOSALS AND COMPILING THESE TERMS TO MAKE A MODEL PROPOSAL WHICH THE GOVERNMENT THEN EXPECTED ALL FOREIGN BUSINESSES TO ACCEPT.

5. THE AMBASSADOR STATED THAT HO CHI MINH LEFT NO DEFINABLE IDEOLOGICAL TESTAMENT FOR THE AGING SRV LEADERSHIP TO USE AS A BLUEPRINT FOR POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT. AS A RESULT THE SRV LEADERSHIP HAS TURNED INCREASINGLY TO THE USSR AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL. HE EXPLAINED THAT DURING THE WAR YEARS THE HANOI LEADERSHIP, FOR THE MOST PART, BASED WAR EFFORT APPEALS TO THE NORTHERN POPULATION ON NATIONALISTIC THEMES. HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT THE NEW APPEALS TO COMMUNIST THEMES (FREQUENTLY REFLECTING SOVIET ORIGINS) ARE IN SOME WAYS AS FOREIGN TO THE NORTHERN POPULATION AS TO THE SOUTHERN POPULATION. BOTH THE VIETNAMESE AND SOVIETS APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE THIS AS A PROBLEM AND ARE MAKING A STRENUOUS EFFORT TO INCULCATE (SOVIET) COMMUNIST DOCTRINE IN CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF THE SOCIETY

NOTABLY IN THE MILITARY. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT GREAT NUMBERS OF LESS-THAN-SENIOR MILITARY CADRE ARE TRAVELING TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR TRAINING AND HE THEORIZED THAT THE HANOI AND SOVIET LEADERSHIP MAY BE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF SRV LEADERSHIP TO BE OF MILITARY ORIGIN.

6. THE AMBASSADOR ARGUED THAT MOST FUNDAMENTALLY, THE SOVIETS AND VIETNAMESE SHARED A COMMON AVERSION TO THE EXTENSION OF CHINESE INFLUENCE INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE BELIEVED THAT THE SOVIET MOTIVES WERE ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGATIVE IN SEEKING SIMPLY TO CONTAIN THE CHINESE POWER. HE FELT THAT WHILE THE VIETNAMESE SIMILARLY WANTED TO BLOCK THE CHINESE IN THE REGION THEY ALSO HAD

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 VIENTI 00391 01 OF 02 290831Z

POSITIVE MOTIVATION: THAT OF EXTENDING THEIR OWN POWER IN THE REGION.

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00391 02 OF 02 290839Z
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R 290720Z MAR 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9153
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0391

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. COMMENT; THE AMBASSADOR'S VIEW SEEMS WELL REASONED AND IS IN ACCORD WITH THE VIEWS OF A LONG-TIME HONG KONG BASED OBSERVER WHO RECENTLY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IT MIGHT BE "TOO LATE FOR THE WEST IN VIET NAM."

8. WHILE A CLOSE SOVIET-VIETNAMESE RELATIONSHIP IS A "NATURAL" IN MANY RESPECTS, THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF EVENTUAL DIVERGENCE IN POLICY OVER THE LONGER TERM. INASMUCH AS MOSCOW'S OPPOSITION TO CHINA IS FAR MORE OPEN AND OBDURATE THAN HANOI'S, HANOI MAY EVENTUALLY COME TO SEE THE SOVIET EMBRACE AS LIMITING ITS OPTIONS IN DEALING WITH PEKING. CONTINUING SOVIET OPPOSITION TO THE EXPANSION OF VIETNAMESE LINKS TO THE WEST, JAPAN IN THE SHORT TERM AND WESTERN EUROPE AND EVEN THE U.S. IN THE LONG TERM, PROBABLY WILL ALSO ENCOURAGE THE VIETNAMESE EVENTUALLY TO SEEK SOME DISTANCE IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS.
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 00391 02 OF 02 290839Z

9. FOR THE SHORT TO MIDDLE TERM (PERHAPS MEASURED AS THE TIME REQUIRED TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL OF INDO-CHINA AND REACH FOOD SUFFICIENCY THROUGH PRODUCTION AND MODEST IMPORTS) VIET NAM'S GREAT NEED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND ITS HISTORICAL WARINESS OF THE NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH APPEARS TO ENSURE THE CONTINUANCE OF SOVIET-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS AS FORESEEN BY THIS REPORT'S SOURCE. CURRENT VIETNAMESE PROBLEMS WITH KAMPUCHEA (IN THE WORDS OF THE SOURCE) SEEM TO HAVE "SEALED THE BARGAIN", FOR THE TIME BEING.
MCWILLIAMS

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